

11/2/77

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001

JOSEPH A. PAGE
PROFESSOR OF LAW

Dr. Virgil T. DeVault
Secretary General
International College of Surgeons
1516 North Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, Ill. 60610

Dear Dr. DeVault:

This is to inform you of a matter which in my judgment merits the most serious consideration by the distinguished organization which you serve.

Dr. Jorge A. Taiana, a Vice President of the International College of Surgeons in 1950-52, 1960-62 and 1969-70, has been held prisoner by the military government of Argentina for the past 18 months. Dr. Taiana, Argentina's foremost surgeon, served as his country's Minister of Education in 1973-74. On April 5, 1976, shortly after the present military government took power by means of a coup d'etat, Dr. Taiana was arrested and imprisoned. He has remained incarcerated from that time to the present, and is clearly a political prisoner. But what is most outrageous about his case is the fact that the authorities have never charged him with any crime! He has had no opportunity to defend himself, because he does not know the specific (or even general) offense of which he has been accused. This seems to be as clear-cut a violation of human rights as could be imagined.

Dr. Taiana has been a Research Fellow in Surgery at Harvard under a Rockefeller Grant (1941-42), and has served as an assistant in surgery at the Massachusetts General Hospital, the Peter Bent Brigham and the New Deaconess Hospitals in Boston. He has made numerous trips to the United States to perform surgical services. In addition to his association with your organization, he is a member of the American College of Surgeons, the American College of Chest Physicians and the International Broncho-Esophagological Society. He belongs to academies and societies in Italy, Paraguay, Brazil, Spain, Mexico, France and Peru, as well as in his native Argentina. He has received decorations from the governments of Spain, France, Panama and Mexico. He has been Professor of Thoracic Surgery and Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences in Buenos Aires, and Rector of the University of Buenos Aires.

Though I have never met Dr. Taiana, I became interested in his case during a recent visit to Argentina. I feel that in addition to its obvious human-rights aspect, the continued imprisonment, without charges, of Dr. Taiana represents a deplorable waste of a human resource which could be serving mankind in Argentina or elsewhere.

I am bringing Dr. Taiana's plight to your attention in the hope that the International College of Surgeons might consider making some gesture on his behalf. The most effective step that could be taken at this point would be simply a letter to the U.S. Ambassador in Argentina expressing concern and asking that he look into the matter. Any communication should be sent to:

Hon. Raul Castro
U.S. Ambassador to Argentina
A.P.O., N.Y. 09871

If I can supply you with any further information, please write to me, or call me at (202) 624-8379.

With thanks for your kind and prompt attention, I am

cc: Dr. Henry P. Leis, Jr.

Lot 81D208
Box4963 (2/12)

Sincerely yours,

Joseph A. Page
Joseph A. Page

AR033B
Nov. 2, 1977

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☐ In Full

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date ☐ Declassify on ☐ Reason